

Effects of Ambient Water Holding Time on Community Groups and Rural Areas

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The Region 8 Laboratory is currently conducting comparison studies to evaluate the effect of holding times on microbiological samples from ambient water sources. The comparison is being carried out to determine if there is a significant difference between samples analyzed at 6 hours and 24 hours for total coliforms and *E. coli*. The current regulation specifies a 6-hour holding time when performing microbiological testing on ambient water sources. With the current 6-hour holding time in place, the sampling locations available for routine testing and monitoring are limited to those within close proximity to the Region 8 Laboratory. The 6-hour holding time has a significant impact on the volunteer community groups that utilize the EPA laboratory for microbial monitoring support. These groups are not able to deliver samples to the laboratory within the holding time limits and will be unable to continue monitoring many rural watersheds.

The results of this comparison may allow for testing of ambient water samples using a longer holding time. If the comparison shows that 6-hour holding time results are not significantly different from results using a longer holding time (e.g. 24-30 hours), the longer holding time may be used. This will allow Region 8 to monitor communities in more remote locations and give us the ability to sample sites in a larger geographical radius than before. The longer holding time would also be more convenient and less costly for the sampling groups since they would no longer have to travel to the laboratory within the 6-hour holding time limit to deliver the samples. This comparison study began in January 2004 so the initial data will be available for the poster presentation.